



Senator Feinstein Raises Questions over Report of Missing Explosives in Iraq October 25, 2004

San Francisco – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today urged the Bush Administration to explain how 380 tons of powerful explosives, including those used to demolish buildings and detonate nuclear weapons, disappeared from a major Iraqi munitions cache.

After the onset of the war in Iraq, Senator Feinstein sought reassurance from the Administration that steps were being taken to secure munitions sites. This included a September 5, 2003 letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, a May 1, 2003 letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell, a February 26, 2004 letter to CIA Director George Tenet and in subsequent letters and Senate Committee hearings.

Now, an article in today's *New York Times* documents that the Iraqi interim government has warned that 380 tons of explosives are missing from the facility known as Al Qaqaa – one of the largest in Iraq.

“Both the Defense Department and the Intelligence Community were aware of the importance of this site before the war. The fact that these explosives are now missing, points out the failure to provide enough troops to secure major ammunition dumps and to take the steps necessary to keep these explosives out of the hands of terrorists,” Senator Feinstein said. **“It also shows that what the Pentagon told me about the biggest ones being secured is not true. This is really malfeasance by those in charge of the war effort.”**

During a September 24, 2003 Appropriations hearing, Senator Feinstein asked Secretary Rumsfeld and General John Abizaid, head of the Iraqi war operations, why more than 50 sites, many of which contained bombs, bomb materials, rocket-propelled grenades, as well as shoulder-launched missiles, were left unsecured by the military.

General Abizaid acknowledged “a tremendous number of sites with ammunition” were in Iraq. “The biggest ones, we secure,” he said. “The ones that are known, but unsecurable, for various reasons, because of their location or because we don’t think that the material in them necessarily needs to be secured full-time, receive some amount of patrolling.”

“General Abizaid testified that the large sites were being secured. That does not appear to have been the case. I am urging the Department of Defense to provide a full account of what happened and why,” Senator Feinstein said. **“I am also urging the Administration to inform Congress what efforts are underway to trace the material and ensure that it is not used against U.S. troops or by terrorists who may have smuggled it into the United States or elsewhere.”**

Senator Feinstein helped provide \$100 million in the 2004 Supplemental Appropriations Bill to be used to demolish munitions sites. She now plans to ask the Pentagon for a detailed report on how the money has been spent and is prepared to seek additional resources if necessary for the effort.